

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-12

INFO OCT-01 ADP-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-09 H-02 INR-09 L-03

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ACDA-19 GAC-01 IO-12 T-03 MC-02 OMB-01 IGA-02 RSR-01

NIC-01 EUR-25 /144 W

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R 200830 Z MAR 73

FM AMCONSUL MADRAS

TO AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

TO RUEHC/ SECSTATE WASHDC 2123

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AMCONSUL CALCUTTA

C O N F I D E N T I A L MADRAS 259

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MASS, PFOR, IN, PK

SUBJECT: MILITARY SALES TO PAKISTAN: SOUTH INDIAN REACTIONS

REF: MADRAS 246

1. SUMMARY OVERALL, SOUTH INDIANS REACTED WITH CUSTOMARY REASONABLENESS TO NEWS THE US HAD LIFTED ITS EMBARGO ON ARMS SALES TO PAKISTAN (AND INDIA). OUR FRIENDS HAVE BEEN DISAPPOINTED, BUT NOT ALIENATED, AND APPEAR TO BE RECOVERING WELL. THE PRO- SOVIET LEFT HAS GOTTEN SOME MILEAGE FROM IT. ALL BUT ONE SIGNIFICANT EDITORIALIST HAVE CONDEMNED US, SOMETIMES VITUPERATIVELY, FOR THE RECORD. THE ABLE SENIOR ARMY COMMANDER FOR THE REGION IS POINTEDLY UNWORRIED.
END SUMMARY

2. IN INDIVIDUAL CONTACTS, SOUTH INDIAN REACTION TO THE LIFTING OF THE EMBARGO ON MILITARY SALES TO INDIA AND PAKISTAN HAS BEEN CHARACTERISTICALLY REASONABLE AND BALANCED. WE HAVE BY NO MEANS BEEN EXONERATED FOR RUBBING A RAW INDIAN NERVE, BUT (APART FROM THE PRESS) SOUTHERNERS MOSTLY AVOID THE STRIDENCY AND POSTURING THE ANNOUNCEMENT PRODUCED ELSEWHERE. SOME HAVE
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PRIVATELY EXPRESSED CONCERN THAT MILITARY ELEMENTS HOSTILE TO BHUTTO WILL BE STRENGTHENED; A FEW WORRY ABOUT RENEWED PAKISTANI CONFIDENCE AND THUS INTRANSIGENCE IN THE SIMLA CONTEXT; MOST AGREE THERE WILL BE NO EFFECT ON THE SUB- CONTINENTAL MILITARY BALANCE. MORE IMMEDIATE CONCERNS SUCH AS TAMIL NADU' S POWER SHORTAGE (AND WHETHER RELEASE OF 87.6 MILLION WILL HELP ALLEVIATE IT) GENERALLY DOMINATE LOCAL ATTENTION.

3. AMONG POLITICIANS, AS WE HAVE NOTED BEFORE, THOSE WHO MOST IDENTIFY WITH US TEND TO REACT WITH GREATEST PAIN TO WHAT THEY CONSIDER US BETRAYAL. THUS STATE SWATANTRA LEADER H. V. HANDE, AT A POLITICALLY- ORIENTED DINNER MARCH 16, WAS LOUDEST IN CONDEMNATION OF ANNOUNCEMENT AS EVIDENCE OF CONTINUED PRO-PAK " TILT" (BUT WAS AT PAINS TO REITERATE FRIENDSHIP BEFORE DEPARTING). OUR ACTIONS DURING THE WAR MAY HAVE PARTIALLY DESENSITIZED INDIAN OPINION: AS A SENIOR, WELL- DISPOSED CIVIL SERVANT TOLD US, ARMS SALES TO PAKISTAN " ARE EASY TO SWALLOW AFTER THE ENTERPRISE."

4. REFLECTING SOUTHERN PRAGMATISM, SEVERAL PERSONS HAVE ECHOED MYSORE GOVERNOR' S POINT (REFTEL) THAT TIMING OF ANNOUNCEMENT WILL INTERFERE WITH INDO- US THAW, BESIDES COMPLICATING NEW AMBASSADOR' S TASK.

5. IN A FRIENDLY ENCOUNTER WITH POLITICAL OFFICER MARCH 19, MAJOR GENERAL M. R. RAJWADE, THE SENIOR ARMY OFFICER IN THE REGION, DID NOT RAISE THE ISSUE. LED TO IT IN ROUNDABOUT FASHION, HE SAID HE EXPECTED THE ANNOUNCEMENT A YEAR AGO; BELIEVED IT WAS A USEFUL CLEARING OF THE DECKS FOR BETTER BILATERAL RELATIONS: FELT " THE POLITICIANS HAVE TO MAKE NOISE," BUT DO NOT REFLECT REAL CONCERN; AND CONSIDERED THE TIMING, AT THE BEGINNING OF AMBASSADOR MOYNIHAN' S EMBASSY, TO BE CORRECT IN MAKING BEST USE OF THE GOODWILL SURROUNDING HIS ARRIVAL. (RAJWADE, IT SHOULD BE NOTED, IS NOT EXPRESSING SOUTHERN INDIFFERENCE. HE ARRIVED ONLY IN JANUARY FROM NORTHERN COMMAND IN JAMMU AND KASHMIR.)

6. AT A MARCH 19 DINNER HOSTED BY THE CONSULGENERAL, NONE OF THE 17 INDIANGUESTS RAISED THE SUBJECT WITH HIM. NOR DID ANY OF THE 65 COORGS WITH WHOM HE SUPPED AT MERCARA MARCH 17.

7 WITH THE SIGNIFICANT EXCEPTION OF THE HINDU, WHICH ON MARCH 16 CONCLUDED LIFTING THE EMBARGO WOULD NOT IN ITSELF
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DAMAGE INDIA' S INTERESTS AND MIGHT BOLSTER BHUTTO, EDITORIAL

COMMENT IN SOUTH INDIA HAS RANGED FROM REGRETFUL TO VITUPERATIVE. UNSURPRISINGLY, KERALA PAPERS FROM RIGHT TO LEFT CONDEMNED THE US ACTION. LESS PREDICTABLY POPULAR TAMIL DAILIES, WHICH RARELY COMMENT ON EXTERNAL AFFAIRS, RITUALLY CONDEMNED THE STEP. TYPICAL OF THE CONSPIRACY THEORY FAVORED BY PRO- CONGRESS, MILDLY PRO- SOVIET EXEGETES WERE COMMENTS BY SWADESAMITRAN (MADRAS, NOMINALLY INDEPENDENT) MARCH 14 THAT SALES TO PAKISTAN WERE NEEDED TO KEEP US ARMAMENTS FACTORIES OPERATING; AND BY THE DECCAN HERALD (BANGALORE, LEFTIST) MARCH 17 ATTRIBUTING THE POLICY TO A WISH TO A) DIVERT INDIAN RESOURCES FROM BUTTER TO BOMBS, AND B) INDUCE THE PAK ARMY TO DUMP BHUTTO.

8. IN THE MAIN, SOUTH INDIAN PRESS REACTION TOOK ITS THEMES FROM THE MID- WEEK LOK SABHA DEBATE AND GOI POLICY STATEMENTS. IT IS LESS A REFLECTION OF DOMINANT REGIONAL ATTITUDES THAN A RECORDING, OFTEN RITUALIZED, OF THE APPROVED STANCE ON AN OLD QUESTION. AT THIS WRITING EDITORIAL COMMENT HAS DIMINISHED CONSIDERABLY.
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